

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Amended) A composite material for use as a base in a wallcovering, [which composite material comprises] comprising a substrate layer that is permeable to water vapour and a coating layer that is permeable to water vapour such that the composite material has a water vapour transmission rate of at least 30 g/m² 24 h at 25 °C/75% RH, [characterized in that] wherein the coating layer comprises a plastics material, which plastics material consists essentially of a copolymer of an olefin and [an alkyl acrylate or methacrylate or a mixture of two or more such copolymers,] a member selected from alkyl acrylate, alkyl methacrylate and mixtures thereof the [said] plastics material having particles of filler distributed therein, and [in that] the substrate layer comprises a nonwoven material that comprises cellulose fibers.

4. (Amended) A composite material according to claim 1, [2 or 3,] in which the nonwoven material also comprises synthetic fibers.

6. (Amended) A composite material according to claim 4 [or 5], in which the synthetic fibers have a fiber length of 5 to 20 mm and a linear density of 1 to 6 denier (0.11 to 0.67 tex).

7. (Amended) A composite material according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 6], in which the nonwoven material is bonded with a resin binder.

8. (Amended) A composite material according to claim 7, in which the resin binder is an acrylic resin or vinyl acetate resin.

9. (Amended) A composite material according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 8], in which the nonwoven material comprises an opacity-increasing filler.

11. (Amended) A composite material according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 10], in which the substrate layer has a basis weight of from 30 to 200 g/m² and the coating layer has a basis weight of from 10 to 50g/m².

12. (Amended) A composite material according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 11], in which the plastics material has a water vapour transmission rate of at least 14 g/m² 24 h at 25°C/75% RH, measured on the unfilled plastics material at a mass per unit area of 45 g/m².

13. (Amended) A composite material according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 12] in which the plastics material comprises a copolymer of a C₂ – C₄ olefin and at least one of a C₁ – C₄ alkyl acrylate or a C₁ – C₄ alkyl methacrylate.

15. (Amended) A composite material according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 14] in which the filler is present in the coating layer in an amount of up to 40% by weight of the filled plastics material in the coating layer.

16. (Amended) A composite material according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 15] in which the filler in the plastics material [is] comprises a mineral filler[, e.g. calcium carbonate or a mixture of calcium carbonate and titanium dioxide].

17. (Amended) A composite material according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 16], in which the coating layer has a thickness in the range of from 10 to 50 μm and the substrate layer has a thickness in the range of from 80 to 500 μm .

18. (Amended) A composite material according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 17], in which the coating layer [is embossed and/or printed] includes embossing, printing or combinations thereof to provide a decorative effect.

19. (Amended) A process for the production of a composite material that has a water vapour transmission rate of at least 30 g/m² 24 h at 25°C/75% RH and is suitable for use as a base in a wallcovering, which process comprises applying a coating formulation as a coating layer on a substrate layer, the coating layer and substrate layer being permeable to water vapour, [characterized in that] wherein the coating formulation comprises a plastics material that consists essentially of a copolymer of an olefin and [an alkyl acrylate or methacrylate or a mixture of two or more such copolymers] a member selected from alkyl acrylate, alkyl methacrylate and mixtures thereof and has particles of filler therein, and [in that] wherein the substrate layer comprises a nonwoven material that comprises cellulose fibers, and [in that] wherein

the composite material is not stretched by more than 3 percent in the machine direction and is not stretched by more than 3 percent in the cross direction.

20. (Amended) A process according to claim 19 for the production of a composite material according to [any of claims] claim 2 [to 17].

21. (Amended) A process according to claim 19 [or 20], in which the coating is effected by extrusion coating.

22. (Amended) A process according to claim 19, [20 or 21] in which the composite material is not stretched by more than 2 percent in the machine direction and is not stretched by more than 2 percent in the cross direction.

23. (Amended) A process according to claim 19, [20 or 21] in which the composite material is not stretched by more than 1 percent in the machine direction and is not stretched by more than 1 percent in the cross direction.

24. (Amended) A process according to [any of claims] claim 19 [to 23], in which the coating layer in the composite material [is embossed and/or printed] includes embossing, printing or combinations thereof to provide a decorative effect.

25. (Amended) The use as a wall covering of a composite material according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 18 or a composite material produced by the process according to any of claims 19 to 24].

26. (Amended) A method of covering an area of wall surface that comprises applying to said area of wall surface a composite material according [to any of claims] claim 1 [to 18 or produced by a process according to any of claims 19 to 24].

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